

THE GULL



Golden Gate Audubon Society Volume 73 Number 7 July-August 1991

WITH A NAME LIKE "MOOSE", YOU KNOW IT HAS TO BE GOOD

In September we'll start our 91/92 season of programs with something special. The Thursday evening program by wildlife research photographer "Moose" Peterson will be followed up with a Saturday field trip on wildlife photography.

Beginning at 7:30 p.m., Sept. 12 in Berkeley, Moose will present a multi-projector slide show, "Carrizo Plains, Last of the Grasslands." The Carrizo Plains, in California's central valley, is the home of many endangered plants and animals which we'll discover by starting below the ground with the sky as the limit. We examine the dependency of life on the plains on the activities of the Giant Kangaroo Rat. This busy nocturnal animal creates homes for two other endangered species and is the major prey source for another. The presentation covers a decade of research and photography while exploring California's last, vast grassland.

On Saturday, September 14, Moose will conduct a wildlife photography workshop at Palo Alto Baylands. The cost of the workshop will be \$20.00 and space is limited to twenty participants. The evening program is, as always, free, and we hope ten times as many folks show up. You can attend the program only, the field trip only, or both. Turn to page 115 for details on the field trip.

—JOELLE BUFFA

GGAS ACTS TO SAVE THE BAY AND DELTA

The Golden Gate Audubon Society is the lead plaintiff in a lawsuit against the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) over the Board's recently released Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Delta Estuary. This lawsuit was initiated in order to provide adequate fresh water flows to our Estuary.

As you may know, several years ago the SWRCB instituted a three-phase program that was to determine a Water Quality Control Plan for the Bay and Delta that would protect the beneficial uses of those water bodies. These beneficial uses include fisheries, wildlife and wetlands. To us it seemed obvious that the issue of water diversions from the Sacramento River to Southern California would play a key role in such a Plan.

(continued on page 106)

LAWSUIT

There was abundant evidence to show that the decline in fish populations (such as that of the striped bass, the chinook salmon and the delta smelt) were the result of too great a diversion of fresh water.

The State Board took extensive testimony on this issue. GGAS, in conjunction with the other Bay Area Audubon chapters, contributed testimony by hiring an environmental consultant to analyze the impacts of fresh water diversions on the freshwater/brackish marshes of Suisun Bay. Our testimony showed that these marshes were being turned into salt marshes because of the lack of fresh water and that this change from fresh/brackish to salt would severely impact many species dependent upon those marshes. Further study also indicated that several endangered plants, native to those marshes, faced great danger from this alteration. Additional testimony all indicated that the diversion of freshwater from the Bay and Delta had devastating impacts on fish and wildlife populations.

Responding to this abundant evidence, the SWRCB, in 1988, actually came out with a draft Water Quality Control Plan that would have led to increased freshwater flows into the Bay during the critical spring months.

Dismayed, the southern California and agricultural water interests raised such a hue and cry that the SWRCB hastily withdrew the draft Plan. It did not come as a surprise to find that in the next draft Water Quality Control Plan the Board decided to once again

ignore the flows/wildlife issue and no increased flows were proposed. To get around the flows issue, the Board has adopted a "Water Quality Control Plan for Salinity" that deals only with temperature and salinity.

This is a scientifically untenable position. To protect beneficial uses such as fisheries and wildlife, flows must be considered because flows are, in some cases, the only factor that effects a beneficial use. For example, flows, alone, are responsible for the movement of fish eggs from upstream, where they are spawned, to downstream where there are greater food sources once they hatch.

This appears to us to be clearly in violation of the Porter-Cologne Act, which regulates water quality issues, the California Environmental Quality Act and the California Endangered Species Act.

The SWRCB's decision not to address the flows issue will allow for even greater diversions of freshwater from our Bay and Delta in future years. This will probably result in the actual extinction of some species (the delta smelt, some runs of salmon, possibly the striped bass and also some native plants) and to the alteration of our entire estuary from one of variety and productivity to one of limited value.

This lawsuit is critical for the future of our estuary. The Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund (SCLDF) is our attorney and we are joined in the suit by about twenty other environmental organizations including the Bay Area Audubon Chapters, Natural Resources Defense Council, Environmental Defense Fund, Save San Francisco Bay Association,

United Anglers, California Native Plant Society, Citizens For A Better Environment, The Bay Institute and the Sierra Club (Bay Chapter).

This lawsuit will be expensive. Although SCLDF does not charge lawyer fees, there are court costs involved (already close to \$20,000).

Contributions for this purpose are tax-deductible. Please make your check out to GGAS and please note on your check that it is for the Bay/Delta lawsuit. Our address is 2530 San Pablo Ave., Suite G., Berkeley, CA 94702.

Thanks to all of you for your support on this issue and good luck to us all. Our Bay needs it.

—ARTHUR FEINSTEIN

FIELD TRIPS CALENDAR

Sunday, July 7—Chimney Rock, Pt. Reyes. See June *Gull* for details.

Saturday-Sunday, Aug. 3-4 Yosemite High Sierra Ecology. For those who enjoy trees, flowers, geology and great views, as well as birds, meet us at 8:45 a.m. on Saturday, Aug. 3, in the parking lot at the end of the road to Saddleback Lake. The Saddleback Lake Road takes off north from the Tioga Pass Road several miles east (toward Lee Vining) from the Tioga Pass entrance station to Yosemite National Park.

We plan to take the boat across Saddleback Lake (small charge) and hike up to Conness Lakes, which are over 11,000 feet in elevation. If we are lucky, we may see White-tailed Ptarmigan. You will need both stamina and some reasonable ability to hike at high altitudes. Bring plenty of liquids, a lunch, sun-screen, hat, day-pack, and good hiking boots or footwear with adequate tread (not standard tennis or jogging shoes.)

On Sunday we will go to an as yet undetermined location to be announced

on Saturday, returning by 3 p.m. for those driving back to the Bay Area. Campgrounds are available at Tuolumne Meadows within the Park and at a number of locations between Tioga Pass and Lee Vining at Forest Service Campgrounds. Lodging is possible at Tuolumne Meadows High Sierra Camp and a number of motels in Lee Vining: Best Western Lakeview Motel, (619) 647-6543; Gateway Motel, (619) 647-6467; and Murphey's, (619) 647-6316.

You should allow at least 20 minutes driving time to our Saturday rendezvous from either Lee Vining or Tuolumne Meadows. Leader: George Peyton (415/444-3131—weekdays). \$(✓)

Thursday-Sunday, August 8-11—Backpacking trip in Lassen Volcanic National Park. We will backpack in three miles to Snag Lake and spend three nights in primitive camping by a stream near a large meadow. We should see a mixed flock of warblers and other songbirds that summer in Lassen, resident birds of the mountains, and perhaps some migrating shorebirds. We will be in beautiful country! Everyone will be responsible for his/her own gear and food, although some cooperative meals may be arranged. This trip is limited to 12 people. For details call David Rice (527-7210). Leaders: David Rice and Robin Pulich. \$(✓).

Sunday, August 18—Trip to Farallon Islands. See announcement on page 115 for details.

Trips marked with \$ go to parks and other sites that require an entrance fee.

Carpooling arrangements will be attempted for trips marked (✓).

Problems: If you need a ride or can take a passenger, or if you need information and have difficulty reaching a field trip leader, call Russ Wilson, Field Trips Committee Chmn. (524-2399).

—FIELD TRIPS COMMITTEE

MAY OBSERVATIONS

Although I grew up in upstate New York, I didn't start looking at birds until I had lived in California for years and since then my infrequent trips east have taken place in the late fall and winter, hardly prime time for birds. This year I managed a week in early May...I'll be managing weeks in May for many years to come. Warblers are wonderful—not just one of a kind, dimly seen, hopelessly out of its normal range, but lots of them, all different species, bright and singing. There is something totally compelling about getting out of the car on a busy city street and finding a Chestnut-sided and a Black-throated Blue Warbler flitting about in a bush on the median strip (it was a pretty woodsy median strip, granted). Black-throated Green, Black-and-white, Blackburnian, Magnolia, Canada, American Red-start—I was in heaven for a couple of days. What made it particularly terrific was the fact that this wasn't a pilgrimage site—not High Island or Point Pelee, but plain old Rochester. There are spots just like it all over the east coast. It's quite amazing, and a little sad, to realize that I spent over half my life there without fathoming what wonders existed in the trees around me; fortunately it's not too late to remedy the lack.

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Last month's phenomena upon the high seas repeated themselves as several boatloads of adventurers sailed forth into the often treacherous spring seas for 17-hour pelagic trips on the first and second weekends of the month. Reports from a research vessel cruising off the central coast around the 21st added to the sightings. A partial list of species, along with the maximum number seen on any one day includes:

Black-footed Albatross 50
Laysan Albatross 2

Northern Fulmar	.....	4
Murphy's Petrel	.....	171
Cook's Petrel	.....	5
Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel	.....	12
Leach's Storm-Petrel	.....	160
Red Phalarope	.....	750
Pomarine Jaeger	.....	15
Long-tailed Jaeger	.....	6
South Polar Skua	.....	1
Sabine's Gull	.....	120
Arctic Tern	.....	35
Cassin's Auklet	.....	55
Rhinoceros Auklet	.....	45
Tufted Puffin	.....	7
Horned Puffin	.....	15
(JM, SFB, PtW, BH, THK)		

In addition, two Xantus' Murrelets were reported from SE Farallon Island on the 14th (DaS fide KH).

By now, ducks are mostly gone for the season, but a few notables remained: the male Tufted Duck at Lake Merritt was last seen on the 4th (KSt); one Harlequin Duck at Brickyard Cove in Richmond was seen on the 19th (JM); and an Oldsquaw was reported from Pt. Reyes on the 30th (AdW).

Likewise, shorebirds are in short supply, but here too there were a few stragglers: up to two Solitary Sandpipers in Bloomfield in Sonoma County from April 27th thru May 1 (BBu, NTC) and another individual at Coyote Creek in Milpitas from April 28th thru May 1 (PJM, SBT); Semipalmated Sandpipers at Coyote Creek on the 1st (SBT) and in Shasta County on the 14th (JCS); and a Wilson's Phalarope on Lake Merced on the 19th (MLR).

Franklin's Gulls continued to be seen—it's been a good year here for them: individuals at Stinson Beach on the 16th (SNGH) and SE Farallon on the 19th (DaS); and three at Bolinas Lagoon on the 30th (KH)—The Pyle/Hansen yard list is now up to 242, surpassing a number of state lists. Two Black Terns were reported at SF Bay NWR on the 4th (PJM) and up to thirteen on the 14th and 15th at Hayward Shoreline (JD, fide KRR).

A Mississippi Kite was a fine find at the Pinacles on the 12th (HP). There were also a couple of good owl sightings/soundings: Flammulated Owl at Chew's Ridge in Monterey County on the 11th and 12th (MiF); and Barred Owl in Humboldt County on the 12th (JCS). A Lesser Nighthawk was a bit of a surprise at the Oakland Airport on the 27th (LRF).

Black-chinned Hummingbirds continued to be seen in the South Bay (PJM, SBT); up to six were reported as well as from Bethel Island in the Delta (SGI, GFi, AWi, MLR, SMo). In Pt. Reyes Station, the slightly dislocated Costa's Hummingbird which first arrived in March continued to come to a feeder until mid-month (RS). Calliope Hummingbirds migrated through in moderate numbers during the month, as did Hammond's, Dusky and Gray Flycatchers. the pair of Cassin's Kingbirds near Modesto remained at least through the 17th and appeared to be attempting to nest (DGY, mob). A Western Kingbird at the Oakland Airport from the 24th to the 26th was not expected (LRF).

On the 26th, Dave DeSante was out for his morning run in the hills above Inverness when he heard a **Yellow-throated Vireo** singing in the trees; he spent about 10 minutes watching and listening before heading for the phone to notify the troops who arrived to silence. Despite a thorough canvassing of the area, the bird was not refound . . .until June 3, over a week later.

It's been a moderate spring for warblers, as the list below indicates, but June can bring wonderful things so we'll have to wait and see:

Orange-Crowned Warbler—gray-headed form
1 5/4 Coyote Creek PJM

Nashville Warbler
1 5/3 Mt. Diablo DSi
2 5/9 Mines Road AdW

Virginia's Warbler

1	5/29	SE Farallon	PP
Northern Parula			
1	5/11	Folsom Lake	WEH
1	5/21	San Francisco	DK
1	5/26-30	Olema	DaS, MBu, KH, AdW
2	5/27	Gazos Creek Rd.	RSTh
1	5/30	Stinson Gulch	DaS
Black-throated Gray Warbler			
11,3	5/3-5	Mt. Diablo	RCi, DSi, JM

Townsend's Warbler

250, 75	5/3-5	Mt. Diablo	RCi, JM
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Hermit Warbler

150, 20	5/3-5	Mt. Diablo	RCi, DSi
many		Calaveras Reservoir	MRo

Blackpoll Warbler

1	5/16	Pt. Reyes	DWa
1	5/19	SE Farallon	DaS

Ovenbird

1	5/22	Palomarin	KH
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Kentucky Warbler

1	5/27	Lee Vining	fide ES
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MacGillivray's Warbler

2	5/5	Calaveras Reservoir	MRo
1	5/23	Gazos Creek Road	GFi
1	5/27	Tilden Park	ToC

Yellow-breasted Chat

1	5/4	Coyote Creek	PJM
3-4	5/4	Annadel State Park	LLu
1	5/7-19	Morgan Hill	MiF
up to 5	5/16-25	Bethel Island	SGI, GFi, AWi, MLR SMo
1	5/23	Pt. Reyes	MLR

A Green-tailed Towhee, that denizen of the Great Basin, was singing on Mt. Diablo from the 14th to the 26th (KGH, EB, PS). A Clay-colored Sparrow at Pine Gulch Creek in Bolinas on the 27th may be one of the two that wintered

PELAGIC TRIPS

Pete White leads Farallon Island and Monterey Bay trips again for GGAS. The Farallon trip is Aug. 18, See page 115. The Monterey Bay trip is Sept. 22. Details of the latter in *The Gull* for September.

there (DaS). There were "lots" of Brewer's Sparrows, more displacers from the Great Basin, on SE Farallon on the 19th (DaS) and a single individual on the 29th (PP). Black-chinned Sparrows returned to Mt. Diablo (mob), and a White-throated Sparrow was singing in El Granada on the 15th, well past the expected departure date (BS fie RSTh). Yellow-headed Blackbirds put in a smattering of appearances: a male at Coyote Creek until the 4th (MiF, PJM); a female at Crittenton Marsh in Santa Clara County on the 9th (PJM), and a male in Bolinas on the 27th (DaS). Up to a dozen Red Crossbills were in Golden Gate Park on the 12th (MW).

Observers: Stephen F. Bailey, Erica Buhrmann, Betty Burridge, Mark Butler, Rich Cimino, Tom Condit, Nancy T. Conzett, Joe Didonato, Leora R. Feeney, Mike Feighner, George Finger, Kathy Francone, Steve Glover, Keith Hansen, W. Edward Harper, Kevin G. Hinsta, Bob Hirt, Steven N. G. Howell, Dan Kelly, Theodore H. Koundakjian, Leslie Lieurance, Peter J. Metropulos, Scott Morrical, Joe Morlan, Hans Peeters, Peter Pyle, Mike Rogers, Mary Louise Rosegay, Barry Sauppe, David Sibley, Dianne Sierra, Rich Stallcup, Karl Stecher, John C. Sterling, Penny Stewart, Emilie Strauss, Scott B. Terrill, Ron S. Thorn, Michael Wald, Doug Wallace, Adrian Wander, Pete White, Anna Wilcox.

—ANN DEWART

GIGANTIC BIRD SEED SALE PLANNED

The first GGAS bird seed sale of the fall season will be announced for late September. We have been working with our supplier and will have improved seen mixtures available. Details in *The GULL* for September.

CONSERVATION NOTES THE COMMITTEE AT WORK

The following is excerpted from a report made by a committee member at the May 13th GGAS Conservation Committee Meeting:

In mid April I received a phone call from a party who asked if Golden Gate Audubon Society could be represented at the next East Bay Regional Park District's Board of Director's meeting to protest the destruction of wildlife habitat at the north entrance of Wildcat Canyon Regional Park. When I asked for more information I was told that the EBRPD Staff has proposed removing 3,000 cu. yards of earth from a hillside, as well as scores of mature trees that were growing on it. The reason: to create a level area that could be paved in order to provide a turnaround and parking space for horse trailers. I assured the caller that I'd there, and that I would also attend the press conference he had called—to be held on site the next morning.

At the press conference three TV channels were represented, plus other newspaper and media personnel, and other environmental organizations. I was familiar with the area, known as Alvarado Park, previously owned by the city of Richmond and subsequently acquired by EBRPD. By coincidence, I had been there just a few days before to check out its potential as a hot spot for the upcoming Birdathon. I was shocked to see the same area was now marked to be clearcut, excavated, and covered with pavement.

After viewing the plans for the project, and listening to the reports, I felt well fortified with information, and the following day attended the East Bay Regional Park District's Board of Director's meeting on behalf of GGAS. When I addressed the Board I described

my recent experience in scouting out the area for the Birdathon. I stated that within 100 feet of where I parked my car I was able to identify eight different species of birds in less than fifteen minutes...and these were not your normal backyard birds. There were Orange-crowned Warblers, Warbling Vireos, Black-headed Grosbeaks, Bewick's Wrens, etc. I went on to explain that it was not the only place in the East Bay where those birds could be found, but it was the only place I knew of that close to an urban area and freeway access.

A staff member has previously stated that some of the trees to be removed were already dead, hence their removal was justified. I countered that there were very few dead trees in the area, and even so, dead trees provide nesting sites for cavity nesting birds such as chickadees, nuthatches, woodpeckers, wrens, etc. And when the trees finally do decompose they provide humus to the soil, which in turn nurtures new life. It's all part of the ecosystem, and is another argument to preserve the area intact, not destroy it.

There were speakers from other groups opposed to the project, and there were members of equestrian organizations who supported it. After listening to the controversy from both sides the Board voted to reject the proposed equestrian staging area, and leave the wooded hillside intact. I like to feel that perhaps input from GGAS helped in reaching that decision.

***EDITOR'S NOTE:** This is how GGAS can be effective. Any birder who knows the importance and richness of specific places can help. The knowledge we have may well tip the balance in critical decisions. It only requires a person to appear and explain the facts as we know them. You can learn how to help by joining the Conservation Committee. Call Arthur Feinstein or Bruce Walker.*

INITIATIVE CHANGE OF COURSE

"CONSERVATION NOTES" in *The GULL* for June announced an initiative (CalPAW '92) that would begin organizing efforts for a June 1992 ballot. We asked for volunteers to aid in signature gathering. The Planning and Conservation League (PCL) had backed this in the early stages, but has discontinued the effort, and has promised a new strategy to protect open space, parks and wildlife.

The Governor has agreed with PCL negotiators that the environmental and wildlife bonds will not have an arbitrary cap, and that anything that legislators want to add for local projects will be in fact "add ons" and not "eat intos."

Gerald H. Meral, PCL director, announcing this, feels that a break-through has been achieved with Governor Wilson and his staff.

WETLANDS ARE STILL AT RISK!

50% of the nation's wetlands will be lost if President (No Net Loss) Bush weakens the existing definition of "wetlands." His Administration is in the process of so narrowly redefining the definition of a wetland that soon they will cease to exist. A creative solution to a sticky problem. Please write, or call, President Bush and register your concerns about his earlier wetlands policy or "no net loss" and how the new definitions will destroy that promise. ADDRESS: The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20500. (Phone: 1-202-456-1414)

SUMMER OFFICE HOURS

Through the months of July and August, office hours will be 9:30 to 4:00, Tuesday through Thursday and will be closed completely July 13 through August 6. We will resume normal hours following Labor Day in September.

BACK YARD BIRDER

Since I am basically a back yard variety of birder, I'm quite good at identifying those sounds and bird songs of the species which flit about my yard. When I hear an unfamiliar song, I race out with binos in hand to find the stranger passing through. This spring I've added a new song to my repertoire of known songs: Wilson's Warbler. I haven't a clue why several have been hanging around the past week "working" in my live oak. If only they were eating the dreaded oak moth worm!

Not everyone has the knack of learning birds' songs but it's very helpful in birdwatching. It really dazzles the novice birder, but it's something that you acquire over time. I usually *hear* a bird before I see it because I'm slightly myopic. Since some birds can "throw" their voices it's a challenge to spot them. The sonographs in the field guides are helpful only *after* you've learned a bird's song. I try to describe to new birders the *quality* of sound (is it breathy or wheezy, nasal, rich, a trill, thin or reed-like?) as well as the pattern (rising, falling, repetitive, staccato?). Sometimes a phrase describes it best. "Oh, dear me," says the Golden-crowned Sparrow. The Warbling Vireo bubbles, "Rosita, Rosita, where are you?" The Rufous-sided Towhee sounds like a large insect, "SCREE!"

Even though many insects, mammals and amphibians use sounds to communicate, human speech (and possibly the "language" of whales, dolphins, etc.) is the only form of communication more complex than that of birds. Not all birds have the physical capability of song. Storks, e.g., use a lot of bill clacking to "talk" to one another. Vultures hiss, grunt and coo. Some birds use their feathers to make sounds and others expel air from their throats. This is all a way of advertising their

availability as mates and helps them to establish a territory. Once a mate is found, these primary songs seem to cement pair bonds. These arias are belted out from a prominent perch. Birds who nest in open fields without many high perches sing while flying *over* their territory.

As humans, we often feel the need to burst into song occasionally, an emotional release. Apparently birds often feel the same urges and will warble their seeming-happiness at odd times, such as nighttime.

There's yet another kind of bird song called whisper song. It's usually similar to the primary song but is crooned softly. It's a lovely, sweet, comforting song, seemingly reserved for birds' young. I've heard the raucous Scrub Jay as well as the perky Chestnut-backed Chickadee whispering their sweet nothings.

Calls are also a key means of communicating immediate information: "Danger!"; "Keep up with the flock"; "Hey, we found food!"; "Look out!" Since calls are such vital means of keeping in touch with each other, the birder who uses pishing (kissing sounds) will attract birds to him if he sits or stands still. Curiosity, it seems, abounds among many in the animal world. In Africa we watched amazed as an Impala walked *toward* a hunting cheetah! It needed to identify the enemy, I guess. But it seemed almost morbid curiosity. Most birds also seem to need to ascertain if there is danger. Warning sounds seem to cross all bird language barriers, including human pishing.

There are many champion singers in the bird world along with some whose sounds barely qualify as songs. The Pacific-slope (formerly Western) Flycatchers who live in my yard have a pretty monotonous "song," a rising "Tu-weet" with a "plink-plink" at the

end. But I'm fond of their familiar tweets as well as their wide-eyed appearances. Among my local favorite songsters are the California Thrasher, Warbling Vireo, Black-headed Grosbeak, Swainson's Thrush, Song Sparrow, Bewick's Wren and Mockingbird. I'm sure your list is different—beauty is in the ear of the beholder! What a drab world it would be without bird songs! Remember that the next time the local Mockingbird awakens you at midnight with his latest musical creation.

—MEG PAULETICH

A TALE OF SUPREME INATTENTION

(Reprinted from the *Bodega Bay Navigator* of May 23, 1991. The author was onetime editor of *The GULL*.)

The following is so pathetic, so embarrassing, so downright ugly, that I approach it's telling with indescribable humiliation and chagrin.

Early on the morning of May 4, I received a call from Pat Peters who said she lived on Sandpiper above the old hulk, Marin. She said there was a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron hunting along the rocks near that wreck. I hadn't had my coffee yet, was still in my robe and slippers, and I know I sounded uppish when I posed the possibility that it might be our much more common Black-crowned Night-Heron. No, she replied firmly, it was of the Yellow-crowned persuasion.

Well! It would be a life bird for me, a first Sonoma County record for the species, and a great bird to locate at Bodega Bay because their usual territory is the midwest and eastern U.S. I said I'd throw some clothes on and run right over and have a look. She said she'd wave to me from her house.

As I started dashing out the door, I suddenly thought to call Elmarie Hutchinson and tell her about the

possibility of a rare bird. I also added: "I trust the tone of this woman's voice; she seems very sure about the identity."

Even as I started the truck, I had already made two cardinal errors: I hadn't had my first cup of coffee and I hadn't looked in a field guide, stupidly assuming that I'd find a hunch-backed, short-necked bird like its local cousin.

I parked under the young cypresses on the rim of the Rail Ponds and got out, visually scanning the edge of the harbor. Up past the marooned boat, the Deplorable, I saw a long-necked bird actively hunting and my head clicked, "Great Blue Heron." No other birds were in sight.

I did run my binoculars past the bird, noticed a really odd white facial patch and thought, "Now is that a juvenile GBH from last spring, or just an aberrant sort of plumage? Hmm.."

I also noticed his back was pretty uniformly gray.

But the bird, neck outstretched, was something like 75 yards from me and moving in rapid hops and short flights away and towards Mason's Marina.

I glanced up the hill to see if anyone was waving.

Charles and Peggy Jackson pulled up and asked what I was seeing. I told them the report I'd gotten, adding, "All I see is a Great Blue up there." They simply glanced at the bird and nodded.

We decided to go to the Hole in the Head to see what was up there. As our two vehicles pass the area where we had last seen the bird, I looked carefully and saw nothing.

In this morning's mail I found a post card from Elmarie. "How," she wrote, "did you ever know that last week was my birthday? You got me two lifers in that week! I went back to the dairy and refound the Solitary Sandpipers, and then on Saturday, that wonderful

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron! Thank you, thank you!"

The groan/shriek I let out in the Post Office sent other mail-gatherers flying for the safety of their cars with furtive glances back toward me as they fled.

"Happy birthday, Elmarie," I hissed several minutes later as I walked into her living room, "Tell me about that heron!"

"Well, you know, I was so busy that day I didn't think I could go looking for it, but then I remembered I had something to do at the Lab, so I decided to check the shore as I drove past. Suddenly...this was about 12:20...I noticed this odd head and I stopped and took a really careful look at a mostly gray bird down on the rocks. I was really surprised when I realized it was the heron you'd called about, because its fully outstretched neck fooled me. Don't all the field guides show them hunched up like our Black-crowneds?"

"Yes," I muttered bleakly, also adding with a whimper that because there has been no other birds nearby to judge size, and because it was so far from me, I'd made the narrow and quite intellectually arrogant decision that it was something usual.

(In fact, I remember while standing on the viewing platform at the Hole in the Head with the Jacksons, I mentioned I tend toward the conservative while birding, sometimes to my own detriment.)

From now on, I will check every sparrow, search every shorebird, carefully observe every curlew and scan every hawk. And heed every heron.

And Ms. Peters: PLEASE call me anytime you find something notable or interesting. Just don't casually wave, if in fact you did. Come down the hill and take me by the hand and lead me to the bird.

It is truly mortifying to see a life and

a county record species, to completely sully whatever reputation I may have. Yes, I saw a lifer...but then I didn't, if you know what I mean. It's unforgivable.

—NANCY CONZETT

FALL BIRDING CLASSES IN SAN FRANCISCO

Evening birding classes taught by Joe Morlan will be starting Sept. 3, 4 and 5. All classes meet 7-9:30 p.m. in room 222, Marina Middle School, 3500 Fillmore at Bay St. Free parking is in the school lot off Bay St. on the east side of the building.

The instructor is co-author of Birds of Northern California and compiler of the recorded "Northern California Rare Bird Alert" sponsored by Golden Gate Audubon Society. Slides illustrate all classes and the text for all classes is *A Field Guide to Birds of North America*, second ed., by the National Geographic Society.

Field Ornithology I meets on Tuesdays. It is an introduction to birds and birding, combining basic field skills with the study of bird ecology, biology and behavior. Part A starts Sept. 3 and ends Oct. 22. Part B starts Oct. 29 and ends Dec. 17.

Field Ornithology II meets on Wednesdays. It is a continuing in-depth study of identification and status of North American land birds, including warblers, buntings and sparrows. Part A starts Sept. 4 and ends Oct. 23. Part B starts Oct. 30 and ends Dec. 18.

Field Ornithology III meets on Thursdays. It is a continuing study of water birds including shorebirds, gulls and terns. Part A starts Sept. 5 and ends Oct. 24. Part B starts Oct. 31 and ends Dec. 19.

These classes are endorsed by Golden Gate Soceity. Optional field trips on

weekends may be arranged by the instructor. Please bring binoculars and field guides to class if you have them.

Fees are \$50 for each eight-week course. Students need not take part A to enroll in part B classes. Pre-registration is recommended. For information call the San Francisco Community College, Community Services Office, 561-1840.

FARALLON TRIP

GGAS will sponsor a boat trip to circle the Farallon Islands. Past trips have produced sightings of Tufted Puffin, shearwaters, albatross, Hump-back whales and several other species of marine mammals. The date is August 18. Reservations can be made by mailing \$29 per person with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to GGAS, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G, Berkeley, CA 94702. Make checks payable to the Golden Gate Audubon Society, please. We plan a very early morning departure from the Emeryville Marina. Details on when and where to meet will be sent with reservation confirmation.

WHAT THE BOARD DID

At its May meeting the GGAS Board completed its deliberations on the budget for 1991-92. Of course, a budget is a plan which matches program and financing. The decisions included cautious estimates of usual revenue: interest (at 6.4%), dues (rebated from NAS) unchanged, gifts 2.5% higher, a fund appeal to support the proposed state lobbyist, and a fund raising event. Increases in expense included the higher rent in our new location, a salary increase, a postage increase, and an increase for the Conservation Committee. Decreases from the previous budget result from savings on insurance, and reduced subscriptions, etc. Birdathon

revenue and its distribution to The Mono Lake Committee and National Audubon, not previously carried in the budget, have been added.

Details of the budget and financial report for the year completed May 31, 1991 will appear in *The GULL* for September.

AUDITOR'S REPORT ON FILE

The report of the review conducted by our auditors, Kirby and Mangini, last August, is on file for inspection at our office.

WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPH WORKSHOP

Moose Peterson will conduct a workshop on Saturday, Sept. 14th, at Palo Alto Baylands. Starting with the sun at 7 a.m. just after high tide, we'll stalk the birds of the marsh first, looking to photograph the elusive California Clapper Rail and Black Rail. Moose has been part of the annual clapper rail census along with photographing clapper rails for the last decade. If anyone can get you those once-in-a-lifetime photos, he's the one. After the sun is up and the excitement of the morning starts to slow down, Moose will lead the group to the mudflats to liven things up

(continued on next page)

PHOTOGRAPH WORKSHOP

Count me in for the announced workshop with "Moose" Peterson Saturday, Sept. 14 at Baylands. My check for \$20, payable to GGAS, is enclosed.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

again. Combine the excitement of birding along with the challenge of photography, and you have a fun packed day!

The cost of the photography workshop is \$20.00. Space is limited to twenty participants, so sign up early on the form provided on the previous page. Mail it with your check to GGAS.

—JOELLA BUFFA

AUDUBON ADVENTURES FILLS A NEED

Even in these days of school crises, we are delighted to report very positive comments from our *Audubon Adventures* classrooms. In the 1990–91 school year, GGAS funded 32 individual classrooms in 18 schools. In San Francisco *Audubon Adventures* went to M.L. King Middle School where teacher, Ann Clementz writes "As always my classes and I have loved *Audubon Adventures*. It acts as a springboard for discussion and a catalyst for individual study." Elmer Eckhart of Grattan School says "The paper is great and I use it a variety of ways. This year I even had a blind student so had some editions brailled." "My first grade class thoroughly enjoyed and learned about nature and animals from the *Audubon Adventures* this year. Thanks a million, your *Audubon Adventures* series is wonderful," from Monroe Elementary teacher, Merlinde Brown in San Francisco. Classes at Paul Revere, Lakeshore, El Dorado and De Avila Schools in San Francisco also receive the series.

In Oakland from Laurel School's Karen Boyden, "Yes, I'd love to continue receiving *Audubon Adventures* next year. It was an excellent adjunct to my outdoor ed. curriculum." Com-

ments in the same vein came from other teachers receiving the series at Hoover Elementary, Hawthorne, and Sequoia Schools in Oakland.

Woodstock and Otis Schools in Alameda, Downer and Dover Schools in San Pablo and Anna Yates Elementary in Emeryville complete the list of schools receiving *Audubon Adventures*.

As you can see the series is well received by the classroom teachers who have the opportunity to use it. We would like to encourage those of you who are parents and teachers and are aware of a classroom in need of the series to write, or call, the office with that suggestion. The materials cost \$30.00 per classroom for the school year. We also heartily encourage donations to the chapter earmarked for that purpose.

Next year's curriculum will include Bats, Deciduous Trees, Sea Turtles, Owls, Amphibians, and Butterflies and Moths. Let's work together to help children learn about our natural world!

RESTORING THE EARTH

Berkeley's own environmental group, *Restoring the Earth*, has published the first issue of a newsletter and the second printing of a landmark restorations project directory. The first issue of the newsletter features work at Yosemite National Park. It invites submissions and inquiries.

The directory, *Ecological Restoration in the San Francisco Bay Area*, provides useful technical information and access to experts in a new field. The office is at 1713 C Martin Luther King Way, Berkeley, CA 94709.

WINDPOWER AND RAPTORS

In *The Kite Call*, newsletter of the Ohlone Audubon Chapter, for May was a report of their April meeting, at which representatives of US Windpower spoke about generation of electricity by windpower. The June issue included a response from an Ohlone member. The following report by Don Emery is printed because of its interest:

Presenters expressed confidence in the economic and environmental contribution of wind production of electricity. They cited the value of windpower as a peak load producer for California, and for Rocky Mountain states. Peak electrical requirements coincide with peak wind conditions in those areas.

Costs of windpower generation have been reduced to nearly those of fossil fuel generation. Presently, some of the power of the wind is wasted because the turbines must produce electricity that oscillates at the customer (PG&E) specified rate. Propellers must be feathered or braked to keep the turbine rotating in the necessary RPM range. A joint research project with PG&E and the Electric Power Research Institute of Palo Alto aims to convert to direct current and then back to alternating current, allowing the generators to vary their speed to optimize wind energy collection, and the output of power to match the utility customer's transmission lines. (Having direct current in the process also offers the possibility of storing electricity, reducing dependence on steady wind conditions. Power storage is one of the opportunities for improving efficiencies. Covering the Livermore hills with lead-acid batteries, however, is not an attractive prospect.)

Cosmetics, in fact, is one of the three problems recognized by USW as obstacles to further growth. The other

two are cost and environmental concerns. They did not describe plans to modify the shape of windmills to reduce objections from those who prefer the look of rounded, golden hillsides to the prickly look, of the Altamont Pass area. They hope to help them accept the new look. Cost reduction seems tractable as new processes and lighter materials are developed. They are quick to point out that windpower produces no toxic wastes nor air-borne pollutants. There are, however, some environmental problems which are being studied.

Ground dwelling animals seem little affected by the existence of the windmill plants. Cows seem contented. Squirrels, and other four-legged wild animals appear not to feel the loss of the 5% of the land occupied by the windmills and associated equipment. Small birds seem unaffected.

Large birds, however, are another matter. The US Windpower presenters said that many of the dead birds (mostly raptors) found in the windmill area were electrocuted by the wiring on the pole which leads electricity from the underground cables which harness the windmills to the overhead wires which connect to the PG&E grid. The pole has been re-designed, increasing the distance between the stand-off insulators, and using insulated wire between the end of the three wire cable from the ground and the three wires of the overhead transmission system. As a result, they seem confident that many fewer birds will be electrocuted.

Environmental studies have been commissioned by both USW and the County of Alameda. The USW study is expected in July and the County study in late summer or fall of this year. As at least one appears to still be in progress, there were offers of help in making field observations and questions about the scope of measurements taken.

Problems of land owners rights and

industrial safety were cited as reasons to decline the offers of help with observations. It was pointed out that those problems could be solved if desired; and one person was there who had participated in the County study.)

Some questions were very technical, e.g., what range of sonic emanations was measured? Birds are sensitive to sounds of tens of cycles per minute (as opposed to the human lower limit of about 3000 cycles per second). Could the windmills be enticing birds into their blades by singing at tones much below human hearing?

Other questions were left unanswered. The presenters were unable to say how many bird kills have been recorded, for example. They seemed to be conscious of the environment and willing to accept information and to field tough questions.

RESPONSE:

I read with interest about the meeting with representatives of USW. I am dismayed by the vagueness of the information supplied regarding raptor mortality caused by wind turbines.

I serve, for the County of Alameda, on a technical advisory committee. The committee meets periodically to discuss investigative problems, offer advice, and evaluate the work done by Biosystems Analysis, Inc., which is studying the impact of wind turbines on raptors in the Altamont. Committee members have received a progress report done by the company on their findings for 1989 and 1990. Joan Stewart, manager for Environmental Affairs for USW, is a member of the same committee and was therefore given the same facts and figures that are at my disposal.

During the three seasons of the study to date, 143 dead birds were found in this study area. Extrapolating from this sample for the entire Altamont Pass area, Biosystems estimates that between

28 and 34 Golden Eagles died there last year. Between 113 and 136 Red-tailed Hawks also died during the same time span, as did 177 to 198 American Kestrels.

A relatively small fraction of these fatalities occurred through electrocutions; the rest resulted from collisions with turbines. While steps have been taken to eliminate or reduce electrocutions (by redesigning power poles), no progress has been made so far in finding means to prevent collisions with turbines.

I cannot understand why Ms. Stewart would be less than forthright about passing on these figures to you. While the deaths of these birds are clearly infractions of both Federal and State laws, no action, punitive or otherwise, has been taken by agents of the California Dept. of Fish and Game or the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service. Inasmuch as the agent of the latter organization has also received a copy of this report, I cannot fathom Ms. Stewart's motives. I believe that we, as Californians, must jointly find solutions to environmental problems, no matter what our personal convictions may be.

—HANS PEETERS

PARK BOARD APPOINTMENT

Dr. Carroll Burns Williams, adjunct professor at UBC, specialist in forestry and resource management, was named to replace Mary Lee Jefferds on the East Bay Regional Park District Board. Dr. Williams is a past president of the Berkeley School Board, and was a research forester and entomologist for the US Forest Service. GGAS congratulates Dr. Williams, and appreciates the perspectives he will bring to the board.

NEWS FROM THE RANCH

Audubon Canyon Ranch (415) 868-9244
 Shoreline Hwy., Stinson Beach, CA 94970
 Wildlife Sanctuaries & Centers for Nature Education under joint sponsorship of Golden Gate, Madrone, Marin and Sequoia Audubon Societies
 Gary Holloway, President

IT'S OVER ALREADY?

Our public season ends on July 14, so if you haven't made it out to the Bolinas Lagoon Preserve you only have a couple of more weekends. The heronry should be quite active right up until the 14th. Remember the birds arrived later than any year on record, so with the delayed nesting season, young birds should be active on most nests through July. Actually, the last weekend may be about the best time to observe young egrets taking their maiden flights. It's a sight to see, so maybe you should mark that second weekend of July for a day at the Ranch.

THANKS AGAIN

Those of us active in ACR want to thank you, our supporters, for another great season. Thanks for visiting us, and sharing some of your wonderful experiences. Thanks to all those weekend

hosts from our supporting chapters. A very special thank you to the Ranch Guides who helped interpret the pond, the lagoon and the heronry for our thousands of visitors. It's hard to remember how we did it without their help. A very special thanks as well to Edris Cole and Ken Browning who did such a great job in the bookstore and coordinating our weekend activities.

—DAN MURPHY

ANY OLD MACS?

The GGAS office is in need of a MacIntosh Computer (MacPlus or SE, etc.) Many volunteers know how to use the Mac, but we don't have one. What we do have are frustrated volunteers, an office manager who needs help, and a chapter that can't make efficient use of those who want to help.

If you have recently upgraded to a new computer, or if you have an old Mac you no longer use, please think about donating it (tax-deductible!) to GGAS. You could be a hero/heroine. Thanks.

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FOR GGAS

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Mary Lee Jeffords

Graduation of T.K.S.

Gift of

Ellen M. Calvert

His Parents

FOR AUDUBON ADVENTURES

Peter J. Watkins

The Society welcomes gifts in general or gifts in honor of or in memory of relatives and friends. Such gifts will be used as specified by the donor or, if unspecified, at the discretion of the GGAS Board of Directors. This includes their use for general GGAS activities or for special programs of the Society including Audubon Canyon Ranch of which GGAS is a sponsor. Please send your gift in the form of a check made out to Golden Gate Audubon Society, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G, Berkeley, CA 94702. All gifts are tax deductible. The Society is also appreciative of any bequests. Such bequests should specify as recipient the Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. All gifts, donations and bequests will be acknowledged in *The Gull* as well as personally on behalf of the Society by the Secretary.



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Mall for all individuals listed above should be sent to GGAS office.

Send address changes to office promptly; Post office does not forward *THE GULL*. Monthly meetings: second Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Joint membership — local and national \$30 per year (individual); \$38 (family); includes *AUDUBON* Magazine and *THE GULL*; to join, make checks payable to National Audubon Society and send to GGAS office to avoid delay in receiving *THE GULL*. Membership renewals should be sent directly to the National Audubon office. Subscriptions to *THE GULL* separately \$10 per year; single issues \$1. High school and college student membership \$18 per year. Senior citizen individual \$21, senior citizen family \$23. Associate Membership in Golden Gate Audubon Society, \$10 per year.

**The Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. was established January 25, 1917,
and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948.**

The *Gull* deadline is the first of the month for the following month, and July 15th for September issue.